



# Wisconsin E-Brief for Partnership Schools

October-November 2013

An e-newsletter from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to promote family-school-community partnerships for children's learning

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## *Wisconsin Schools Keep Communities, Families Informed and Invited*

Wisconsin schools and districts are using a creative variety of ways to communicate school success stories and recognize and invite community participation in school activities. Following, are just a few examples.

### School-Community Program Ideas

- The Oshkosh YMCA offers [six free swimming lessons](#) to all second graders in the **Oshkosh School District**. Students learn basic swimming and water safety skills. The lessons meet curricular goals in health, physical education, and social studies.
- The **Rhineland High School** Key Club hosted a free [Senior Citizen Luncheon](#) on October 7. Students served lunch and led citizens 55 and older on a tour of recent school renovations. Students described how the new areas benefit their education and thanked participants for their support.
- Eighth graders in the **Northland Pines School District** are inviting community members to help them replenish local honey bee populations with the ["Adopt-a-Bee"](#) program. Students will keep participants updated with pictures, e-mails, and newsletters on the health of the hive. The district is also offering free parent workshops on ["What Kids Need to Succeed"](#) and has made a [YouTube video](#) promoting district learning opportunities.

### District Weblinks for Families and Communities

- The **Sheboygan Area School District** lets parents know [how to solve a problem](#) by listing school staff families should contact, by topic, with concerns.
- The **Ellsworth Community School District** created a [facilities video](#) that leads viewers through school buildings to illustrate where improvements are needed.
- The **Wausau School District** offers a glossary of [educational acronyms](#) and a list of recent [e-flyers](#) about upcoming school and community events on its parent/community page.
- The **Stevens Point School District** posts a link to pictures of community members and organizations, students, and staff [recognized by the school board](#) on its home page.
- The **D.C. Everest School District** features its 2013-14 [annual school budget report](#) to the community on its home page.
- **Hayward Community School District** invites parents to complete a 2013-14 [district parent survey](#) from its home page.

## Parent Programs

VISTA member Kelly Berg at Hackett Elementary, **Beloit School District**, is organizing an effort to give parents STAR awards when they:

- S** – serve as school volunteers
- T** – talk about designated topics that will promote children’s school success
- A** – attend a school parent meeting or workshop
- R** – read with their child.

Parents will track their activities and will be recognized by the school for their involvement.

The **Mequon-Thiensville School District’s** [VOICES](#) initiative offers monthly parent chats that connect families of students dealing with social, emotional, or academic issues with professionals and other parents. Past parent chat topics have addressed ADHD, bullying, study skills, PBIS, and mental health issues.

Does your district invite community and family participation? Please [let us know!](#)

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### *Parent Teacher Conferences: A “health check” on student progress*

Looking to boost parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences? Make sure parents understand that it’s just as important for them to meet with their child’s teacher as it is to meet with their child’s doctor for a health checkup. Here are a few more points to let parents know why they should attend.

The parent-teacher conference:

- **is an information exchange.** The information parents bring about a child’s life outside of school and the information that teachers bring about a child’s in-school learning will help both develop a [plan](#) to help the child succeed.
- **makes the teacher more effective.** The [more the teacher knows](#) about a child, the better s/he can address the child’s needs.
- **can be initiated by parents.** Encourage parents to contact the teacher if they aren’t able to attend a regularly-scheduled conference or whenever they have concerns about their child.
- **is a window into what each child learns** in the classroom and an opportunity to pinpoint [at-home learning strategies](#) parents can use to help their child improve.
- **when student-led, is a chance for the student to take ownership** of his/her academic performance and may increase parent attendance. Try a [student-led PowerPoint conference](#).
- **is a chance to share student data** with parents.
- **builds parent-teacher relationships.** Let [ELL parents](#) know that a translator will be available.

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### *DPI launches WISEdash Public Portal*

Wisconsin parents, community members, and educators have a new public reporting tool to discover all types of data about Wisconsin schools and districts. WISEdash is a data portal that uses "dashboards," or visual collections of graphs and tables, to provide multi-year education data about Wisconsin schools. WISEdash stands for “Wisconsin Information System for Education Dashboard.”

Viewers can find detailed information about state, district, and school statistics and trends on student achievement, attendance, and enrollment; rates of graduation rates, student discipline; and information on school staffing, finance, and courses. Links to national data sources are also available. User guides and a quick video on the WISEdash homepage help get new users started:

<http://wisedash.dpi.wi.gov/>.

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## *Middle School Policy and Personnel Critical for Partnerships*

### **New study findings released**

How can middle schools cultivate comprehensive and inclusive programs of partnership? The findings from a recent study of eight mid-Atlantic middle schools suggest the following recommendations for strengthening partnership programs:

- **Enact a district-level research-based policy** that guides all schools—including middle schools—to involve family and community partners in their children's education.
- **Align school-level partnership activities** with the district policy and supports so that parents of students in the middle grades are engaged in age and grade-level-appropriate ways.
- **Form a diverse action team** for partnerships that plans inclusive parent involvement initiatives and engages all students' families in activities linked to school improvement goals for student success.
- **Provide time and training for principals** to use district-level support for their school-based partnership programs, collaborate with colleagues in other schools, and form productive social ties with parents to strengthen the support of school, family, and the community for student learning.

A thoughtful district policy on partnership program development publicizes the district's priority and provides a clear expectation for schools to implement the policy. More important, however, is having the infrastructure (e.g., staffing, budget, and other supports) that will support the schools' efforts to engage all parents. Read more at

<http://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/315/Improving-Collaboration.aspx>.

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## *November Events*

- National Parent Involvement Day is November 21, 2013. For ideas on how to celebrate family engagement in your school, visit <http://www.projectappleseed.org/abc.html>.
- [Parents for Public Schools](#) has designated November as Parent Engagement in Education Month and has developed a [calendar](#) of family activities to support student learning.
- In November, [National PTA](#) will launch a *2014 Take Your Family to School Week Toolkit*. *Take Your Family to School Week* will be from **February 17-21, 2014**. The theme will be **Supporting Student Success**, and will focus on family engagement solutions that are proven to help prevent the risks associated with high school dropout.

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The **Wisconsin E-Brief for Partnership Schools** is a bi-monthly newsletter of news, events, research, and promising practices to keep Wisconsin schools and districts focused and moving forward on family-school-community partnerships for children's learning. You are receiving this e-brief because of your involvement in a partnership-related event or initiative sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

**Your comments, ideas, and stories are vital to this newsletter. Please tell us your achievements in promoting children's learning with families and community members, as well as your challenges and questions. Partnership practitioners learn most from each other, so *let's hear from you!***

This newsletter and previous editions are online at <http://fscp.dpi.wi.gov/>.

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